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OUT OF THE EARTH

And Other Lyrics

By BENNETT WEAVER

OUT OF THE EARTH

I (a)

We hear again the slow-chilled lark
Breathe up his soul through the meadow dark.
The northwest scud is in the sky;
He is gathering strength to fly.

Gathering beauty, gathering power
Out of the earth for the testing hour;
For the long sky-way, the weary wing,
The heart too bitterly tired to sing.

There by the blackened clover root,
The blasted vervain, the aster shoot,
Of earth's dark faith and the beam of a star
He is brewing force for the very far.

Out of the earth he is lifting love
For the storms that skirl in the dark above;
Out of the joy of the ever-past
He is winning his own sure truth at last.

I (b)

The earth is deeper than we guess
And full of things we shall not know;
We are but arrow leaf and cress
Withered against the brook's thin flow.

We are the thorn tree on the knoll
Rising enough to stand and cut
The wind, and cry and give her soul
Out to the dark. Our veins are shut.

We are chink-lichen fastened tight
Against the boulder which the plow
Must turn out from. And in the night
The dark frost breaks the roots — as now!

We are the drift of a hot cloud
Over the flame-land of the west,
And while the fields are singing loud
We veer and turn to ashen rest.

Ours is a house whose doors are barred,
Whose oilless lamps no hand can move:
The lintels there are scratched and scarred
By the fierce returning thoughts of love.

II. THE ECHO TO THE SEA

Your law shall take a star along
An upward orbit twined with space;
But what shall be the law of song
And laughter in a human face?

Though there the unseen ether lifts
The swelling deep and Betelguese,
What force can stay the mind that drifts
To something vaster far than these?

Drifts and is wrecked — oh, what can stay
The heart, or swing it into poise?
It shakes among the powers of day
And in the night it hears a noise

Of chaos rushing to the spill.
Where shall it find a central doom?
Where shall it know that ease of will
Which tides know, moving under spume?

The cave gives echo to the sea,
The cliff gives back the bounding cry, —
The trouble of infinity
Is yet to cherish what would die!

Let man whose mind is split in twain
Trust yet the secret, if he can,
Nor guess too soon that all is vain,
Nor be too sure that man is man.

III. READING *MICHAEL*

You read from *Michael*. The night wind
In lengthening drifts went through our pines;
And still you read, bowed by the fire,
The pathos of those simple lines.

Across the lake a flock of sheep,
Lambs tender with their tender ewes,
Gathered themselves by pipe and call
And lay down sweetly in the dews.

Your thought went to your only son,
And mine — my shepherd parent's sleep
Is close above those meadow lands
Where he was master of his sheep.

"Beside the brook of Greenhead Ghyll" —

Your voice became a part of all
The silence mending up the earth.
But still the wild dove sent his call

Out of the willows, and there came
The flutings of the frogs inblent
With many murmurs in the dark.
We were not sad. A strange content

Fell on us gently as dim rain,
Undriven at dusk by any breeze.
We were content. Content we watched
The moon mix with the moving trees.

IV. THOUGH TOO LATE

The clover kneels across the sickle —
Drive on, mower, whip your team!
The duck is bit by the random, fickle
Bullet fired on a darkened stream.

Because it grew in a meadow valley
The oak must feel the logger's jerk;
Because a-hilltop it gets the sally
And smashing split of the lightning's quirk.

Here a seed and there a fruiting,
Here a passion and there a man,
And all stake-tied to the sly, chance bruiting
Which has snarled at Cause since the world began.

Cause, Effect — had our brains been witty
We never had set that mock on Fate;
And if our hearts had a coal of pity
We'd mock that mockery though too late.

V. CROWS

The crows are tacking over corn,
Striking down a sky
Bitter, rolling with hard wind.
They battle and go by.

Along the west the burnt clouds lift
A sun's width from the hill;
'Twixt rack and granite ledge the sun
Hangs bleeding, fiercely still.

But who shall come to haul the shocks
Battened thick with snow?
Corn butts frozen in the earth —
Who shall take and go?

The crows are tacking over corn,
Tacking down the sky, —
Crows — or are they driven men
Too weary chill to die?

VI. THE BROOK

Ever there is water running,
On green stones running down
Through sedges, marsh sedges
That grow near Sussex town.

Cresses are at the spring lip,
Dark cresses, tangled, cool;
And the heron goes stalking
By the glinting minnow pool.

May is the time of gold there
And March the time of steel;
But April, in early April
The whistle willows peel!

Ever there is water running,
I hear it running down
Through sedges, marsh sedges
That grow near Sussex town.

VII. A MARSH WIND BLOWING

The counter of the wind is spread:
Come, buy your perfume here!
An ounce of cedar, berry-red,
And green chill mint-de-mere.

A box of dreams of other years,
A quintal of despair,
The dusty salt of old, old tears,
Fresh balsam for your hair.

Step up, step up with golden coin, —
Oh, friend, do not forget,
Because the lotus moons purloin,
To buy some violet!

Some violet and mint-de-mere, —
Step up, step up, I say!
Come, buy your heart back, buy it here,
And then go on your way.

VIII. THE APPLE

The apple stands among the trees
Maiden and happy. Her white dress
Is inter-jeweled with golden bees
And brooches with sunbeam loveliness.

And like all beings who are fair
With open grace of inner gain,
She casts her beauty on the air
Nor dreams that it may come again.

IX. THE TREE

And do you wail along the wind,
Old pine against my window set?
You sounding symbol of my mind
Blown through with dumb and dark regret!

Beneath the eaves your fingers reach,
And to the stars your head is bare;
God shall not hear, though you beseech.
Beware of prayer, of prayer beware!

Yet your long fate is still my own:
For something hid to expiate;
For something blinded to atone
And counter check the laws of fate.

To make a hymn for your fixed root,
Though you cast not the loaded seed! —
We are the loot of chance, the loot,
Gain of the player's sport. His need

Was not for us. Down drops the moon.
Your branches bar the darkening west;
And is it rest that comes — how soon?
Oh, is it rest? Oh, is it rest?

LIGHT

By HARRY HARTWICK

On September mornings in southern Iowa at five o'clock the sun has not risen above the hazy contour of the horizon. Low mists hang over the dripping grass, and the morning waits at a standstill, silent and mysterious, until about an hour later, when the sun throws its first long vermilion arrows along the hushed and level prairie. In this interval only a sleepy bird's fresh, mellow chirping breaks the stillness, or the rustle of some small animal moving in the grass. The dust lies quietly on the now cool, shadowed road that winds to where sleep little mining towns with their slumbrous shanties.

At a short wooden table near an open window in one of these small shanties a man was seated. He sat in a sunken, settled position which gave the impression of having been held for some time without interruption, absently stirring his black coffee in a thick, heavy cup as he gazed, pre-occupied, out of the window. From time to time the spoon would halt in its jerky revolutions, as the man would appear to sink his faculties even more deeply in thought. Then his eyes would become unblinking eyes, as if they did not see that which ostensibly they did see.

He wore a pair of overalls, and these, together with his grey shirt, from which the sleeves had been unevenly sheared at the elbow, were almost colorless with coal dust. The man himself was short and solidly built. His face, in striking contrast to his stature, was gaunt and drawn, and his blurred eyes were pale and faded. His skin, sallow, colorless, and almost a dead white where the black hair fell loosely over the forehead, was shadowed and uncertainly modelled as though it had been incompletely washed.

From the window a chill morning breeze spread across the oilcloth-covered table and flooded the little room where the man was sitting. He shivered slightly. A moment later a small clock, dimly seen in the dusk at the man's back, gave a small ineffectual chirp in an effort to ring; this effort, however much a failure in other ways, seemed clearly audible to the man's ears. Drawing his arms slowly across the cold oilcloth, he stood up and remained a moment longer looking out of the window until a clatter behind him caused him to turn reluctantly.

As he moved, a woman, whom until now he had seemed not to include in his reflections, dropped her eyes quickly to the red, glowing poker she held in her hand. She was standing in the corner near a small iron monkey-stove, upon which sat a blue coffee-pot, chipped of surface, and a rusty frying-pan in which a greasy cake of some sort was sputtering softly. She was small and attractive in a certain way, with a soft dusky skin and large dark eyes. Now, as the man stood looking at her, she moved a little, nervously, carefully avoiding his gaze. As soon as he spoke, however, she glanced quickly up at him, but as their glances met she looked away. He spoke in a broken English:

"What time is it?"

His voice was thick and almost unintelligible, but he did not take the trouble to clear his throat. Intuitively the woman turned to stare blankly at the clock on a small shelf to her left, but said nothing. It was plain that she did not know the time.

For a few moments the man continued to consider her, then, seemingly not sufficiently curious about the time to trouble himself further, he gave a mild shrug and turned back to his chair. Scarcely had he seated himself again at the table when his gaze returned to the open window, and he again seemed to lose all sense of connection with anything but his own thoughts.

He was thinking:

This oilcloth is fine and cool on my bare arms. It is a sort of a nice cold, but when I come home at four o'clock it will be wet cold, and it will be sticky anyhow. Why shouldn't I stay here in this fine breeze all day, rest my arms on the table, and watch out the window? Down in the mine will be dark and cold and wet today as always, and when we come up my eyes will hurt, and the sun will be going down anyhow. I will say to myself, Angelo Gelotti, you have missed the light again today; there is nothing now but to go home. And so I will come back here, and tomorrow morning I will get up to see the sun rise as I do every morning, and that is all there is anyhow. If it was Italy it would not be so. For there it is not dark, but bright always with sunlight; and I should never have left there anyhow.

Even in the darkened room he could feel the faintly luminous glory of the early morning outside.

He was thinking:

It is hard to breathe when there is such light. It is almost enough to see the little light that I see anyhow. Still if I had stayed in Italy I could see it all, and there would be no mine to go to pretty soon and I could stay home and look out the window. But no, even if I do not like it, I must go down in the mine, and it will be dark anyhow.

No sooner had he finished these reflections than from outside there came a shout and the impatient exhaust of an automobile.

Angelo looked up quickly. It was a sudden, surprisingly swift movement, and he half rose to his feet as if he had been startled — only to sink again slowly into his chair and to appear in a moment not to have heard the shout.

The car in the weedy road clattered shockingly. Fi-

nally the sound of two men approaching the shanty could be heard, the rattle of gravel under their boots and the harsh jangle of their voices mingling unpleasantly with the noise of the car. As the sound of the loud, thick voices could be heard coming nearer and nearer, the man by the table slowly rose to his feet. With lagging steps he turned and walked back to the narrow shelf on which, besides the battered clock, was a dusty, folded newspaper and a large red can. Reaching up abstractedly, he pulled down the can and set it on the floor. Then taking his miner's cap from where it hung on a nail underneath the shelf he began to fill his pit lamp with carbide from the can.

The two men had reached the low door by this time and stood there peering boldly into the dark interior of the shanty. "Hello, Angelo!" said one of them lustily. Angelo looked up slowly from his task.

"Come in," he said briefly.

The two advanced into the room, the rough wooden floor creaking under their heavy boots. Both were dressed as Angelo, in overalls and shirt, and each wore a pit lamp on his cap. One of them, the larger of the two, took the chair at the table and, tilting it back against the wall, sat down. The other, a short, spare Italian with dark, oily skin and perfect white teeth, pushed back some of the dishes and made himself comfortable on the edge of the table.

The woman, who until this time had stared nervously but remained only dumbly observant of the men's entry, now began talking in low, aspirate whispers to the man who had seated himself on the table. She interspersed her words with quick, sly glances at Angelo, who was still bent over the red can on the floor, while the short Italian smiled broadly to show his white teeth and, clasping hands about one knee, rocked complacently back and forth.

What was going on was plain to Angelo, although his

back was half turned and he seemed intent upon his task. Yet he said nothing.

He was thinking:

There is hardly enough carbide left to last a week anyhow. Then I will have to buy some more. Otherwise I should have no light at all. And now Joe comes to set on the table before my window and shut out the light and talk and try to get her to go with him because he is the mine boss. Let him; maybe he thinks that I don't know why he comes to take me to the mine each morning. But I do and why should I care? Except that I should like to drag him from the window so I could see the light, but not for anything else.

He finished filling the lamp and rose stiffly. A dinner pail was sitting on the floor near the stove, and the woman gave it a little shove with her foot. Joe slipped from the table and slapped Angelo on the back jauntily when he came over to pick up the lunch pail, to all of which Angelo said not a word. Then they all three went out and got into the car, the woman watching their departure, unperturbed.

II

During the ride to the mine the two men in the front seat kept up a boisterous conversation full of loud laughter and snickering. Some of the jests that passed Angelo felt were directed at him, but he said nothing and did not raise his head to show that he had heard. The morning had not progressed far as yet, although it was after six o'clock, and the sun had risen some time while they were in the shanty. As this thought occurred to Angelo, a blind anger surged within him, but he gave no sign of it.

He was thinking:

If they had not come I should have seen the sun rise. But now it is too late and I must go down

into the dark without seeing it this morning. If she would go away they would not come back, and I should be alone to look out my window at the light. But she does not go, and I cannot make her go anyhow. Now here is the mine, and for the rest of the day it will be dark and wet and cold, and outside the sun will be nice and fine.

Before he stepped from the car he took one more look at the young day. The air was cool, and the red runners of the sun, even where they shone on his hands, were without heat. From where he stood Angelo could see the blue and silver-green distance, unbroken in any direction except where the stark, black timbers of the "Clive Coal Mining Company" spoiled the illusion of perfect beauty. The sky above seemed eternally light. Not with an expressionless blankness, but with an unfathomable meaning. Then he got down from the car and strode over, head down, to the shaft house.

On the lift that let him and nine other miners down to their work each day, Angelo lit his pit lamp. Arrived at the level where they were working, he strode quickly ahead of the rest down the dimly lighted main entry. He did not wish to have to speak to anyone, and he was afraid that one of them might say something to him. A strong breeze was sweeping down the passageway and tossing the pale electric bulbs eerily. His tools, a pick and shovel, he found where he had left them at the intersection of his alley and the entry. Before he picked them up from where they leaned against the wet wall, he glanced back up toward the shaft. From there the entry slanted down to where he stood. A few of the miners had turned into their alleys while the others were standing talking, finishing conversations begun on the lift, and he could see the ghostly cluster of their pit lamps. After a moment he turned and went into his alley.

Without wasting any time in reflection he fell to picking out the loose coal from the side walls. Slowly his

pick swung up, poised an instant at the top of its orbital movement and lunged downward, burying its shining point in the dull, black shale. For two hours this continued without any relaxation in the monotony of its repetition.

He was thinking:

If the breeze came more into this alley it would be better. But no — there is no breeze in here. Only outside where there is sun also, and in Italy where there is no longer any sun so far as I am concerned. If I had never left Italy everything would still be fine and I could lie under the bright sky with nothing to do but watch the light and there would be no dark. In Italy there is no dark at all, even at night. There I remember there is light all the time. That would be fine.

He worked on. The sound his pick made on the hard shale came back to him flatly from the dark, cold walls about and above him. He paused a moment to light his lamp, which had gone out of a sudden. Then he lay down on his side the better to pick out the coal from under a small ledge of rock. The floor of the alley was netted with small pools of cold water that had dripped from the roof. Suddenly he caught himself staring dully at the blank wall. His arms were heavy and an intense nausea swept over him. In a moment this feeling had passed but his head still felt light, and although he saw the pick handle in his hand, he could hardly feel it. Scarcely had he begun to work again when his pit lamp, which had been flickering for some moments, went out. Sitting up, he lit it; but almost immediately he was in the dark again. He struck another match, but it flared once and went out. He found himself looking fixedly into the dark. He could hear the steady drip of water behind him.

He was thinking:

It is so dark. If only I could have the light from the pit lamp, but no — something is wrong; it will

not light and a match will not burn. I wish there was some light. Perhaps if I dug and dug I would come to Italy — or light. It is dark — only a little light would do now —

He got stiffly to his feet and began to feel about for his pick which he had dropped. As his fingers touched its wet handle in the dark, the awful, even drip of water and the cold caused terror to clutch at him. Seizing the pick he began to beat wildly, aimlessly at the wall. A rock, dislodged by his attack, fell in a cloud of dust. He stepped back and the old feeling of nausea swept over him again, so that a heavy rumble and roar filled his ears. The walls seemed to be crumbling, and he could feel the dust sting and clog his nostrils. But suddenly the noise of the crumbling died out and Angelo could feel a soft, heavy wind come out of the darkness and play coolly upon his face and hands. Then he closed his eyes and sank back to the floor, suddenly overwhelmed with utter weariness. How long he lay there in the cold and wet he could not tell, but all at once it seemed to him that he heard dim voices calling him; "Angelo, where are you?" they were calling, and the sound came like the slow deep throb of music, far off and faint. He opened his eyes.

From somewhere above him a beam of light glanced down, striking painfully on his straining eyes and filling the old mine alley with a sharp, unearthly beauty. Behind the light, he could see blue sky, terraced vineyards on rolling hills, and tall grasses in the sun. "Light," he was saying over and over in his mind, "Italy"; and as he stretched his arms up toward the light all his weariness seemed to fall loosely from him.

He was thinking:

Here is Italy and the sun, and light enough to last forever, and it is all just as I wished it would be. If I had only known I was so near I would have come here to see the sun rise each morning

instead of watching Joe sit on my table before my window and then going into the dark each day to stay where it is cold and wet. Oh, it is all so fine now, and I am glad again.

It seemed to Angelo that all his desires were melted there in that sparkling glow of celestial light, and tears started to his eyes because he was happy and because there, at last, was the light, and it was his light, now and forever. The voices were dying away now, coming like the soft rise and fall of a whisper, and he thought he could sense a quality of eternal promise, a rich, conclusive quietude in that moment. "I am coming!" shouted Angelo.

And so when, still shouting his name, the two men sent down from the shaft house stumbled upon his crumpled body in the wet darkness, Angelo was already gone, and as the light from their pit lamps fell across his sightless eyes it seemed to the searchers that those open eyes saw far ahead. But of this they could not be sure.

GOLDFISH AT DUSK

By CHARLES BROWN NELSON

Now dreamily in iridescent rays

You fall like golden lanterns through the light

That lingers at the swift approach of night.

Unsought by tempest all your sheltered days,

You know no swifter waters, nor the ways

Where angry currents bluster in and out

Of coves along the bottom, and a rout

Of surly fighters thread the seaweed maze.

So see at last the lightning-shattered black

Behind the slender lines of summer rain —

God rest you, little friends, who cower back

Before the picture in a window-pane!

We three shall die among these dusty books

And never know the scarlet sear of hooks.

LOAM BOUND

By JAY G. SIGMUND

Often, when spring was riding on the breeze
And the crows were shaping twig-nests in the oaks,
He drowsed above his big geography
And afternoon had far too many hours:
When the air grew heavy with a shower's threat
He would watch the saffron ribbon of the road
That stretched its dried-clay bed across the knoll;
Through the space beneath the sash he saw the shapes
Of tired horses in a cloud of dust,
Coming along between the dogwood brush,
Dragging behind them just the sort of craft
In which his forebears huddled when they came
To claim these slopes.

They stopped their bony spans
Only to boil their coffee by the road.
Their wagons groaned along on nervous wheels
Keeping their neck-yokes pushing toward the west,
Leaving the settled ones who'd come ahead
To hew the elms and dig the fertile hills —
To shape their cart-thills and to shear their sheep.

He pictured as a moody schoolboy will
The land which these queer wanderers would find,
But as the years went onward in their path
And all the sinews in his youthful loins
Grew tougher, and his voice became more deep,
His day-dreams and his yearnings were of things
That he could see when choring-time was done
By walking through the sumachs to the pond
Or stopping for a moment at the store
Where cross-roads cynics pulled their frowsy beards.

The seasons trooped, and soon he put away
Most of the longings that had come to lodge
Within his soul, to trouble and to coax;
Then, like a bittern when the reeds are green
And the marsh is jangling with the red-wing's notes
He felt the mating urge . . . but even then
His inner self, close tethered by a leash,
Was made to wander in a narrow scope
And he must stay within the neighborhood
To seek a woman who who could fully meet
The cold appraisals of his landed kin
And please the ones who had the widest fields.

"The house can wait; the barn comes first," he said,
"A barn will build a house but houses won't
Bring livestock that will pay for building barns."
The logic of the countryside was his
Because no other kind would bring him land,
And he had seen the scorn that's always flung
At those who mow the landlord's share of hay.

His bride was patient, for the love of land
Had come to her as it had come to him,
Through blood that had been nourished by the crops
Which grew upon the prairie where they went
To take the cattle, bought a month before
The parson heard about their wedding date.

The seeding time went by and whistled tunes
Came floating down the furrowed wastes of loam
Where neighbors flung their stores of new-screened oats:
The killdeer piped above the pasture lot;
One new day saw the sky, a bunting's wing;
Perhaps the next one saw a sooty bank
Come foaming up the east to herald a storm,
But always rich, deep promises of corn —
Signs that a harvest slumbered in the soil

Waiting until a lover's groping hand
Would bring it into fruit when autumn came.

Yet, as he drudged, he sang a tuneless song:
His mate sang, too, and when her first-born came
The song seemed full of pulsing mother-joy,
But later, when the rockers on her chair,
Had worn away from rasping to and fro,
They made a sort of clicking, dry-bone sound,
So all the lullabies she tried to croon
Were hardly heard beyond her kitchen door;
Sometimes the days went by without a note
To mingle with the din of barnyard sounds —
The sounds that always started up at dawn.
Once she had loved the sky on summer nights
And tried to read her fortune by the stars,
But now she only looked for signs of rain —
Rain that would grow good fodder for the lofts
And help the weather-beaten barn to build
The promised house . . . the goal of aching limbs.

When the new house was done — a dream come true —
She found the stairs were steep and hard to climb —
The white sink in the kitchen seemed too low —
She seemed to fade just as the curtains did;
“She didn't get to live there very long,”
The neighbors said about it afterwards.

Years crawl their course in each man's earthly life
In much the same way as a terrapin —
Slowly, but yet with most uncanny stealth
And all the patience that a reptile knows;
And so, to one who grubs the prairie sod,
Or plods behind a harrow through the clods,
The march of years has small significance
As long as herds of cattle multiply
And stys and coops are free from any scourge —

So long as acres spread, walled in with fence,
And bulging barns are red against the dawn.

But tombstones, raising their shafts, among the oaks
Are splendid things to measure decades by
For their lichen-crusts numbers seldom err;
And when a man can tie his plow-team up,
Then plod across a timber lot to read
The records of a generation gone
Spelled out across the stones in chisel marks,
He has small reason to be over-proud
And many reasons to be satisfied.

"Oh, it's too bad," the loose-tongued neighbors say,
"That he don't try to get some little good
Of all they've saved before it gets too late,
Now that he's all alone."

TO ROSES — AND A LITTLE BROWN LEAF

By RUTH LECHLITNER

From warm gray walls,
The indolent dusk of shadow,
And the dry, sweet silence of a summer day,
I feel the fatuous breathing of the roses —
The thick, soft insolence of many roses —
And turn away.

Give me the torn, the bruised:
The hedge-caught leaf — little, and frail, and brown,
That has laughed a brittle laugh in the long darkness,
That has been whirled, and broken —
And trampled down.

(Oh, could I feel today
Some tenderness for roses,
Self-pity would be forgotten —
And little brown leaves would be forgotten, too!)

BRIEF REVIEWS

Lolly Willowses, or The Loving Huntsman. By SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER. (The Viking Press, \$2.00.) The dominant impression which I draw from a leisurely reading and rereading of *Lolly Willowses* is that of richness: richness of conception, buoyant, genuinely original; richness of humor; richness of detail in place and character; richness of phrase. I do not know in what other modern novel can be found so much of vital contact with earth and its people—such a generous living transcript of a family, of an individual life, of landscape—as is contained between the covers of this little book. And the writing is perennially delightful. Only once or twice in the whole volume does Miss Warner's sense of the fitting phrase mislead her into preciousness. One can open the book at random and pick from any page something that one is glad to read again: "rather scowling classical landscapes," "he looked like a blessed goat tethered on hallowed grass," "chicks . . . like bunches of primroses in the moss-lined baskets."

I don't know whether Miss Warner is old or young, whether this is her first novel or her last. But this Englishwoman knows what writing is for—she knows what it is all about: to make us masters of life by making us its tortured slaves—by making us poignantly aware of the richness of each moment of existence.

J. T. F.

"None But the Brave," by ARTHUR SCHNITZLER. (Simon and Schuster, \$1.25.) This long short story is an extraordinary display of virtuosity on the part of a master of the craft of fiction-writing. In some twelve thousand words of introspection, barely punctuated by a few fragments of conversation, Schnitzler gives us the experience of a crucial night in the life of an Austrian lieutenant. The man's unlovely personality is laid bare to us utterly. The little book will be hard to forget, I suspect. I should not care for a whole gallery of such portraits. But this one is an achievement worthy of respect.

J. T. F.

The Ninth Wave. By CARL VAN DOREN. (Harcourt Brace & Co., \$2.00.) For all who have much to say, yet lack the audacity of Theodore Dreiser and H. G. Wells in proffering the public two volume novels, the choice of material so that it will fill one moderate octavo is a problem and an adventure. In his first novel, Carl Van Doren has met this difficulty by choosing to project only the high moments in a man's life—those moments

of divination when accidentally one wanders into the presence of the sybil, suddenly understands her mutterings and shares the compassion in her rheumy eyes. *The Ninth Wave* tells the progress of Kent Morrow in self-knowledge from the night of a boyish triumph in a horse race to the time when he becomes aware of the ultimate aloneness of every human being, and finds only a distant, incurious interest in the fame that comes to him. Yet this fame, in the bombast of Kent's college president, is the ninth wave of his life according to the tradition that the ninth is the highest wave in the breakers.

With the deftness and confidence of one well-travelled in literature, a confidence honestly gained in his service to criticism, Mr. Van Doren has handled the technical problem of joining these moments so that the story mounts in unfumbled octaves. He has a sureness among the thought paths of the sensitive, sophisticated individual like no one so much as Mrs. Wharton, and he has her ability to appreciate nuances of human relationships which others disregard through a sort of wilful callousness. His story is spun with a light golden touch, its pathos implicit rather than expressed.

Apparently modern literature is as shy of heroes and supermen as it is of the grand manner; except for Dreiser's Titan, we have no demi-gods; generals and presidents are taboo. The novelists seem unanimous in their concentration on the more or less average man. If this is not a concession to democracy, it may be a profound individualism. The first insists that all men are important, the second that any man is important—one difference of emphasis that separates sociology from literature. In definitely setting himself the task of showing the spiritual maturing of Kent Morrow who, though no more "average" than his author, lives a moderate and unspectacular life, Mr. Van Doren has produced no epic, no tragedy to torture and haunt and purge, but he has succeeded cleanly and satisfactorily in his aim. E. H.

The Golden Dancer, by CYRIL HUME. (Doran, \$2.00.) Once the reader accepts the first proposition in this novel—that a factory hand, after reading a poem about Daphne, dreams of her and goes in search of her—the rest goes easily enough. The story is mainly devoted to the account of Mr. Wells' rise and fall in Jericho, and the characters developed incidentally are given with a real relish and raciness of conversation. One of the most noteworthy is the Truckdriver. The passage where he

and Wells seek to express their newly-established friendship and yet find themselves inhibited from expressing it is particularly good. There is a little too much of consciously interpolated romance, clotted into occasional rhapsodic outbursts; and one scene, handed over to a philosophizing owl, is especially bad. But the book, on the whole, is good, vividly written, and rich with humor. Mr. Hume has a fine feeling for the felicitous word and phrase.

E. P. F.

Notes for a New Mythology, by HANIEL LONG. (Chicago: The Bookfellows.) It would be better, perhaps, that I should write nothing at all about my friend's book, than that I should write that which might be misread. Therefore I shall say but little about these stories, of which I would gladly say much. I shall say that the memory of this book is like that of the music which is heard recurrently by the people in its pages—a music of lustration and of liberation. I shall say that reading it slowly is like looking long into a crystal without a flaw, wherein one sees through mirrored flowers and trees, human forms and hills and sky, into oneself. And I shall say that in this prose I find from time to time an emotion akin to that which sculpture alone can give me—oldest and most profound of all the arts. Reading it, I think of the small cool ageless figures of Rodin.

Haniel Long has brought together for the tired eyes of our time something of remote and unspoiled beauty and something of intimate and immediate truth.

J. T. F.

The Singing Hill. By MILDRED WESTON. *Cliff Dwellings*. By GLENN WARD DRESBACH. (Harold Vinal, \$1.50 each.) Mr. Vinal is doing a valuable piece of publishing in issuing the series of volumes of contemporary poetry in which these two interesting books are included. The format of the volumes is highly satisfying. The bindings are attractive, the type is clear and pleasing, and the paper and presswork are admirable.

Miss Weston's brief poems are characterized by a naturalness, a fine freedom from affectation or pretension, which is refreshing. They have genuine lyric charm, and ring true with strong emotion. But they are always simple, direct, and spontaneous. These qualities will make them dear to many readers. I am very glad to have Miss Weston's book.

Mr. Dresbach's work is well known to readers of *THE MIDLAND*, since many of his poems have appeared in its pages. In the present volume he returns to the Southwest, which has supplied the material of much of his best work, for the title poem

and a few others. Mr. Dresbach's most characteristic achievements are perhaps to be found in the stanzaic forms of such poems as "Arroyo Twilight" and "Upland Harvest." He writes with a sure mastery of the traditional rhythms of English verse, and with emotional and intellectual depth. His product is deeply satisfying to the reader who values these qualities. I am glad to find at the end of this volume two of the blank verse narratives of which a few have appeared in each of his preceding books. It seems to me that in this form Mr. Dresbach has done some of his finest work, and that perhaps in this field lies his greatest opportunity for growth.

J. T. F.

Valentine's Manual of Old New York. 1927. Edited by HENRY COLLINS BROWN. (Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.: Valentine's Manual, Inc. \$5.) This is the eleventh number of this historical manual, and its jacket bears the appropriate title, "New York in the Elegant Eighties." It is profusely illustrated by reproductions of very interesting pictures from periodicals of the eighties, and the text contains a store of materials for a history of that decade. Its interest is not limited to New Yorkers: it belongs to that group of recent books which detail American social history by decades. It is not as well written as most of that group, but none of them surpasses it in wealth of detail or in illustration.

F. L. M.

BIOGRAPHICAL

HARRY HARTWICK is an art student living in Des Moines. "Light" is his first published story.

RUTH LECHLITNER, whose name is familiar to MIDLAND readers, is now a member of the staff of Henry Holt and Company, New York.

CHARLES BROWN NELSON will be remembered as the author of poems published in THE MIDLAND in May and September, 1925. He is at present a graduate assistant at the University of Iowa.

JAY G. SIGMUND's work is already known to most MIDLAND readers. His latest book is called *Drowsy Ones*.

A volume of BENNETT WEAVER's poems is about to be published by the Dial Press under the title *Sussex Poems*.

